



LiveJustice

**A project of Legal Assistance Corporation of Central
Massachusetts**

Information Sheet

The Problem

Most low-income households in need of legal help are unable to obtain a lawyer because they cannot afford one, and legal services programs do not have the resources to meet the need.

- Over half of the landlords who bring eviction cases in the Worcester Housing Court are represented by a lawyer, while only a fraction of tenants have representation. Not surprisingly, landlords overwhelmingly win the right to evict their tenants.
- Massachusetts landlord-tenant laws allow a tenant to prevail in certain eviction cases by raising claims based on a landlord's failure to repair defective conditions or other landlord behavior. Most tenants do not know of their rights to raise such claims, and many end up losing eviction cases that they could have won had they had timely access to legal information and assistance.
- Until now, the primary method of accessing legal information has been through telephone hotlines. The delays inherent to that system force callers to wait on hold for long periods or to leave a message and wait days for a return call before they are able to speak with a legal advocate. Even when callers do get to speak to an advocate, the hotline system does not provide for representation in most cases.

The Solution

LiveJustice is an interactive website designed to provide low-income tenants facing eviction or living in substandard housing with ready access to legal assistance. Through LiveJustice, tenants and social services agency workers can consult with an attorney or trained paralegal who can provide live legal assistance online. Legal advocates and their clients will be able to simultaneously engage in conversation and share documents and forms through the use of a standard web browser.

The primary features of LiveJustice:

- **Full service:** LiveJustice is a virtual front door to Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts (LACCM). Tenants can get help from the Web site for simple problems. If they need continued representation, they will be referred to a lawyer at LACCM for full representation.

- **Live:** Instead of leaving a message and waiting for a return call or sending an email and waiting for a reply, tenants can talk to an advocate live and get immediate help with their problem.
- **Form sharing:** Tenants and advocates can fill out important court forms and other documents online. Tenants will be able to print out these documents and use them to help with their case.
- **Cobrowsing:** Tenants and advocates can browse Web pages together. The advocate can show the tenant a Web page that contains the answer to the tenant's questions. The tenant can read the answer, ask follow up questions, print it out, and email it.
- **Searchable knowledgebase:** Our more than 250 answers to common tenant questions are stored in a searchable knowledgebase. The knowledgebase keeps track of the most requested documents and prioritizes the documents based on this information.

Objectives

LiveJustice will attempt to improve the timeliness, increase the quality, and reduce the cost of providing legal services to tenants. Our objectives are to:

- Increase the number of tenants who maintain possession of their tenancies and increase the amount of time that tenants are able to maintain their tenancies
- Improve the living conditions of tenants maintaining possession of their tenancies
- Provide a more accessible and convenient means of obtaining legal services

Funding

LiveJustice is made possible in part by a grant from the Technology Opportunities Program, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce. The grant, which is designed to fund innovative uses of technology, provides funding for three years.

Partners

Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts has worked with two other agencies to create LiveJustice--Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS) and Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI). Neighborhood Legal Services, based in Lynn, Massachusetts provides a wide range of services to low-income and elderly households. MLRI is state support center staffed by advocates who are experts in advocacy on behalf of individual and group clients, and in monitoring and working on issues in the judicial, administrative, and legislative arenas. We have worked with NLS and MLRI to create more than 250 questions and answers dealing common tenant problems. Advocates can use this information to provide advice to tenants.

Implementation

This is a three year project. The first year of the project is devoted to the development stage. Milestones accomplished during this period include, hiring a project manager, designing the Web site, contracting with the technology providers, and writing the content. The Web site will launch early in the second year after a test of system with social service agencies and

clients. The second and third year will be devoted to providing advice and evaluating the results.

- **Client Internet access:** An increasing number of clients have computers in their home--especially if they work. Clients who do not have home computers may use public Internet access points, such as libraries or senior centers. We will be doing outreach to these Internet access points to let people know about the service. In addition, social service agencies can provide Internet access to tenants or use the site on the tenant's behalf.
- **Marketing:** We have a number of different marketing strategies. We will be sending out postcards to every tenant who has received an eviction notice. We will be placing ads in buses, hanging posters in public places, and putting advertisements on the radio and cable television. We will be reaching out to social service agencies that serve the tenant population. We will provide them with brochures, posters, and mousepads. We will be going to libraries to discuss the Web site with librarians. We will provide libraries with brochures, posters, and mousepads.
- **Technology:** By design, LiveJustice requires minimal support for clients because access depends solely on the ability of clients to obtain access to the Internet through a standard Web browser. No special training is required to use the system and there is no need for remote hardware or software support. We have contracted with two application service providers. White Pajama hosts our chat and cobrowsing functionality. RightNow Technologies hosts our knowledgebase.

Privacy

We insure the privacy of Web site users at all times, on all parts of the website, and in all interactions. We have a detailed privacy and security policy that requires that everyone with access to client information sign confidentiality agreements. The intake form is submitted over a secure server, and the chat is conducted on a secure server. Communications between clients and legal advocates through LiveJustice are confidential. Information collected through this program will be treated as privileged just as if the information had been obtained through an in-person consultation.

Evaluation

To evaluate the effectiveness of this interactive Internet technology on our ability to expand legal assistance to low-income households, we will conduct a project evaluation in partnership with the faculty and students at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). The evaluation of the project will be conducted in three phases:

- Phase 1 will be a usability test of the Web site in which a sample of human subjects will be asked to interact with the Web site and then complete a paper or email survey in which they evaluate the Web site design and content. Information collected during Phase 1 will be used to improve the Web site before its public release.


- Phase 2 will involve collecting historical information on the disposition of cases before the Worcester Housing Court. Information will be collected on such variables as eviction rates, whether tenant defendants obtained access to legal services, whether they were represented by counsel, whether they offered defenses or counterclaims, and whether they were successful. This information will serve as a baseline against which the impact of LiveJustice.org can be compared.
- Phase 3 will assess user experience and opinion during public use of the LiveJustice.org Web site. Members of the general public who have chosen to use the LiveJustice.org Web site and have agreed to be interviewed will be asked to evaluate their experience with the website. In addition, information on the disposition of any housing court cases in which LiveJustice users were involved will be collected from public records.

LiveJustice Homepage

Welcome to LiveJustice - Microsoft Internet Explorer


File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address <http://www.livejustice.org> Go



LiveJustice

Legal Assistance Corporation
of Central Massachusetts



Home Live Help Self Help About Us My Account

October 2, 2002


News Flash!

[Fewer Tenants are Eligible for Family Shelter](#)
The new budget has lowered the income eligibility for Emergency Assistance Family Shelter. Eligibility was lowered from 130% to 100% of the Federal Poverty line. [More...](#)

[Poll shows support for affordable housing](#)
A poll of voters conducted for the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that a majority think Congress should be spending money on affordable housing issues. [More...](#)

LiveJustice is dedicated to helping low-income residents of Worcester County with housing problems. Operated by Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts, [LiveJustice](#) provides the legal information you need to help solve your landlord/tenant issue. The goal of this Web site is to provide tenants with better access to legal information and support and to enable tenants to keep their tenancies and improve their living conditions.


Get Legal Help Now



Talk to an attorney or paralegal about your housing problem. Your legal advocate may be able to:

1. Give you advice
2. Tell you the steps you need to take to solve your legal problem
3. Help you fill out forms
4. Help you find additional legal representation, if necessary

Search On My Own



We offer a number of ways to find helpful information and resources about housing issues.

1. Look in our legal library
2. Learn about the court system
3. Find out where to go for help online
4. Get addresses and contact information



Internet

LiveJustice Intake Form

LACCM Intake Form - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address <https://www.livejustice.org/cgi-bin/intake.cgi> Go



Home Live Help Self Help About Us My Account October 2, 2002

Returning Clients

If you have used Live Help before, [click here](#) to log in.

New Clients

Live Help is a service offered by LiveJustice. Fill out the information below to chat online with a legal advocate about your housing problem. The advocate may be able to:

- give you advice,
- tell you the steps you need to take to solve your legal problem,
- help you fill out forms, and
- help you find additional legal representation, if necessary.

To receive this service:

- You must be a resident of Worcester County, Massachusetts
- You must be low-income or age 60 or older (See [eligibility guidelines](#))

Live Help is available from 9am to 1pm on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and from 3pm until 7pm on Tuesday and Thursday.

The information you provide us is kept strictly confidential. We do not sell or trade the personal information you give us or use it for any reason other than to provide you with help. ([Why do we need this information?](#))

First Name: *	<input type="text"/>
Last Name: *	<input type="text"/>
Your Maiden Name:	<input type="text"/>
Address, Line 1: *	<input type="text"/>

LACCM Intake Form - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help


Address <https://www.livejustice.org/cgi-bin/intake.cgi> Go

Address, Line 2:	<input type="text"/>
City: *	<input type="text"/> State: MA
Zip: *	<input type="text"/>
Email Address:	<input type="text"/>
Phone:	<input type="text"/>
Social Security Number:	<input type="text"/>
Birth Date: *	<input type="text"/> -Choose One- <input type="text"/> -Choose One- <input type="text"/> -Choose One-
Gender:	<input type="text"/> -Choose One- Race: <input type="text"/> -Choose One-
Primary Language:	<input type="text"/>
Choose Your Password: *	<input type="text"/>
Between 6 and 12 characters	
Confirm Password: *	<input type="text"/>
Opposing Party (For example, your landlord's name or Worcester Housing Authority): *	
<input type="text"/>	
Number of People in Household: *	<input type="text"/> -Choose One-
Household Income, After Taxes: *	\$ <input type="text"/> -Choose One-
Total Household Savings (For example: bank accounts, CDs, stocks and bonds): *	
\$ <input type="text"/>	
I hereby certify that the information contained in this Application for Services is true to the best of my knowledge. I understand that if I have knowingly submitted false information in order to obtain services to which I am not entitled, I may be subject to punishment or other civil liability.	
<input type="button" value="Submit"/>	

Live Justice Cobrowsing Session

Support Center - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Address  https://www.whitepi.net/SC/sc_center.php?function=sc_chat_entry&tenant=LACCM&queue_id=LACCM~~queue~~chat~~101&channel=1 Go

and not yes.

MayaBazar: On the right hand side of your screen, you will see me searching for the answer to your question. You do not need to do anything.

MayaBazar: Please read the information in the window on the right hand side of your screen and let me know if you have any questions. Use the scroll bars around the window to see all the information in the page.

Clear Log Save Log

Finish

Your Message:

Send


Address: Go Back Forward


Status: Co-browsing session has started!

Area of Law
Housing
Eviction

Language
English

Date Updated
09/13/2002 11:55 AM

 **Print Answer**

 **E-mail Answer**

I got a notice to quit (an eviction notice). Do I have to move out?

Question

I got a notice to quit (an eviction notice). Do I have to move out?



Answer

No. Receiving a notice to quit is only the first stage of an eviction process. You are not required to move by the date on the notice. The purpose of a notice to quit is to give you warning that a landlord wants to evict you. It does not allow your landlord to physically remove you from your apartment.

Do not ignore a notice to quit. You may be able to work something out with your landlord. If the eviction is for non-payment of rent, you may be able to stop the eviction by paying

Requires MS Internet Explorer 5.0 or later. Cookies and Java must be enabled.

October 02, 2002 14:49

Done   Internet